

The Muddy Cart

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Russian

Easy
2 min read

St. Nicholas generally maintains in the legends the kindly character attributed to him in the story in which he and the Prophet Ilya are introduced together. It is to him that at the present day the anxious peasant turns most readily for help, and it is he whom the legends represent as being the most prompt of all the heavenly host to assist the unfortunate among mankind.

Once in one of the stories, a Russian peasant is driving along a heavy road one autumn day, when his cart sticks fast in the mire. Just then St. Kasian comes by.

“Help me, brother, to get my cart out of the mud!” says the peasant.

“Get along with you!” replies St. Kasian. “Do you suppose I’ve got leisure to be dawdling here with you!”

Presently St. Nicholas comes that way. The peasant addresses the same request to him, and he stops and gives the required assistance.

When the two saints arrive in heaven, the Lord asks them where they have been.

“I have been on the earth,” replies St. Kasian. “And I happened to pass by a moujik (peasant) whose cart had stuck in the mud. He cried out to me, saying, ‘Help me to get my cart out!’ But I was not going to spoil my

heavenly apparel.”

“What of you?” asked the Lord to St. Nicholas.

“I have been on the earth,” says St. Nicholas, whose clothes were all covered with mud. “I went along that same road, and I helped the moujik to get his cart free.”

Then the Lord says, “Listen, Kasian! Because thou didst not assist the moujik, therefore shall men honor thee by thanksgiving once only every four years. But to thee, Nicholas, because thou didst assist the moujik to set free his cart, shall men twice every year offer up thanksgiving.”

“Ever since that time,” says the story, “it has been customary to offer prayers and thanksgiving (molebnui) to Nicholas twice a year, but to Kasian only once every leap-year.”

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